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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002676

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TAGS: PREL PGOV MOPS PTER IZ

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH COUNCIL OF  
REPRESENTATIVES SPEAKER MAHMOUD MASHADANI

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for 1.  
4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador met July 22 with Council of Representatives Speaker Mahmoud Mashadani. Ambassador said recent Mashadani statements blasting the Coalition presence were unacceptable in tone. Mashadani defended his statements as political rhetoric designed to score points "on the street," but unreflective of his actual views. Mashadani described his recent visit to Iran as successful, and noted Iranian overtures toward cooperation predicated on Iraqi moves to reduce the presence of Coalition Forces and deal with remaining MEK fighters. Ambassador made clear U.S. doubts over Iranian intentions. Mashadani called for further U.S.-Sunni insurgent dialogue. Ambassador said while the U.S. is ready for dialogue, the insurgent attacks need to stop. END SUMMARY.

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IRAN TRIP READOUT; SUNNI GROUPS "READY FOR DIALOGUE."  
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¶2. (C) Mashadani began with a readout of his recent visit to Iran. The Sunni Speaker said he carried a message of reconciliation, and a request to "stop the bloodbath which you have been part of." Mashadani said he told the Iranians frankly that the U.S. presence in Iraq is not consistent with Iranian security interests, but that the U.S. presence is "linked to the security card." He said he told his Iranian interlocutors that as Speaker he would ensure the Council would not create problems for Iran, but that Iran must "reduce" support for Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM). Mashadani further said he advised his Iranian interlocutors to: 1) solve your nuclear problem with the West, 2) write a letter to Bahrain reassuring them you will not invade, 3) solve the Iran-UAE island dispute, 4) build mosques in Anbar province as well as in other areas of the country, and 5) provide electricity from the Iranian grid.

¶3. (C) The Iranians, Mashadani said, want two things from Iraq: a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, and the ejection of MEK fighters from Iraq. Mashadani said he asked Rafsanjani whether Iran today is revolutionary Iran, or Iran the State. Rafsanjani said a State, with real interests, vulnerable to American weapons, but we "cannot show ourselves surrendered in front of our people."

¶4. (C) Mashadani said Iranian President Ahmedinejad greeted him as a fellow Islamist, and claimed

to have pressured the Shia coalition accept him as speaker "because you are known to dislike hostility toward neighbors." He said Ahmedy-Nejad said he is ready to visit Iraq, and contribute to reconstruction. Ahmedy-Nejad said Iran does not want an expensive adventure in Iraq, or instability in Bahrain. He said they Iranians are afraid of U.S. bases in Iraq, and said it is Iran that should be seeking reassurances from Iraq. Iran, he said, should be part of the regional security system, not set against it. Iran seeks the success of Iraq's current government, and is ready to cooperate "even on the military level." While there are some groups Iran cannot control, the are some they can influence. Mashadani said he spoke with MOIS representatives as well, who said they are ready to cooperate in information-sharing "on condition (INIS Director) Mohammed Shahwani is replaced."

¶5. (C) Mashadani expressed disappointment that Iraq's "political project" is not moving forward. He said Sunni insurgent groups are committed to the political process, but remain frustrated by the continued detention of a number of several insurgent leaders. Mashadani said he plans to meet with Association of Muslim Scholars head Harith al-Dari in Syria, where he hopes Syrian security concerns will make them more amenable to cooperation.

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RECENT MASHADANI STATEMENTS UNACCEPTABLE

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¶6. (C) Ambassador told Mashadani that visit to Iran

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and statements made on the visit led some to believe that the trip was an anti-U.S. statement. It is good to hear a different view. However, Mashadani's recent statements (septel) regarding the United States, and Coalition Forces, are a source of great concern for us and our coalition partners. We have worked hard, with success, to bring Sunnis into the political process. While we do not want hostile Iraq-Iran relations, we believe Iran does not want Iraq's government to succeed, but rather to keep it weak and divided. We are ready for dialogue with insurgent groups, but it is time for the insurgency to end this violence. We are ready to work together to address Sunni concerns. Our goal is an Iraq that stands on its own.

¶7. (C) Mashadani responded that he "speaks the language of the street," and that while he must attack the U.S. in public statements, the public support he generates in response is "good for you and for me." Mashadani claimed to gain the confidence of JAM, for instance, from his anti-U.S. statements. But, he said, "you should know that the Tuwaffuq bloc is with you." The Ambassador replied that while reconciliation may be the goal, the gratuitous attacks on us are unacceptable, especially coming out of the office of the speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives. Mashadani acknowledged that he may have gone too far, and suggested closer coordination with the Embassy.

¶8. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

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